



POLICY & PROCEDURE:

Child Protection & Safeguarding

FAO: Staff / Volunteers / Participants / Visitors

INTRODUCTION

The aim of Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship is to provide people of all abilities and needs with the opportunity to participate in educational and therapeutic activities with horses and other animals to benefit their health and well-being.

Sirona is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for children and young people. When involved in any activities provided at Sirona, all children and young people have a right to be safe and protected from harm.

There has been an increasing awareness that some individuals who want to harm and abuse children and vulnerable adults will use centres that provide services for vulnerable adults and children as a vehicle to gain access to these groups.

Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is based on the principles outlined within the following legislation:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004 (amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance (2023) / (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidelines (2023) / (2026)
- Online Safety Bill 2023

Child Protection underpins the following principles:

- 1. A duty of care to safeguard all the children from harm.** All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. (The Children Act 1989 defines a child/young person as under 18.)
- 2. All organisations, which provide services for children, should be able to demonstrate the existence, implementation and effectiveness of child protection policies.** Any interested party may obtain a copy of this policy from the office or via our website <https://sironaequine.org.uk>

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

Sirona recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people; regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm, and from neglect, bullying and exploitation.

Sirona is committed to meeting this obligation by affording the highest level of care for children and young people through its child protection procedures.

This policy and its procedures apply to anyone within Sirona whether those persons be in a paid, voluntary capacity, or as part of a supporting group. This also includes any Trustees/Patrons, members of the committee/board and other designated staff/members.

Sirona will ensure that all staff and volunteers who have direct contact with any children and young people attending Sirona complete a robust application procedure and undertake enhanced DBS disclosure checks prior to having contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, in addition to undertaking mandatory safeguarding training.

OBJECTIVES

Sirona has a responsibility to ensure that its activities are free from abuse and to ensure that it has put into place adequate measures to report proper concerns to the appropriate statutory body. This policy sets the following objectives:

1. To ensure that all those who participate in any way whatsoever are aware of the Child Protection & Safeguarding procedures set out in this policy.
2. To ensure that the Sirona Safeguarding Officer independently seeks appropriate training and guidance on child protection and fully understands the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
3. That all staff/volunteers of Sirona are conversant with the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and ensure these are adhered to.

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4. That Sirona appoints a designated person who will be the Sirona Safeguarding Officer. The Sirona Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for the decision to make a referral to the required statutory body.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer is: **DR HANNAH BURGON**

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead #1 is: **KATE FORD**

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead #2 is: **KIRSTY BOWLES**

One of these members of staff will always be available at Sirona when open.

5. That all new staff and volunteers complete an induction, which ensures that this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure has been read. In addition, all staff and volunteers read the following;
 - Chapter 1 and 3 of the HM Government document, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
 - All staff will read and understand part 1 and Annex A of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*'.
 - All staff will sign a declaration each year to say that they have reviewed the guidance.
6. All staff and volunteers complete Level 2 Multi-agency safeguarding training. The Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Officer complete Group 5 Safeguarding training for designated officers. In addition all staff and volunteers receive annual 'in-house' safeguarding training given by the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. This will include types of abuse, legislation and guidance updates and reporting procedures.
7. That all paid staff, volunteers and others involved with Sirona are aware of their duty to report any incident of alleged child abuse. This may relate directly to an incident at Sirona or it may relate to an alleged incident which has occurred outside of Sirona.

CODES OF PRACTICE FOR STAFF, TRAINERS, THERAPISTS, TRUSTEES, PATRONS AND VOLUNTEERS ETC.

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Adherence to good Therapeutic Horsemanship principles: Equine and Animal-Assisted Learning/Therapy and other activities provided by Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship CIO, aligned with open communication with parents, carers and children, should ensure that a safe and enjoyable environment is established and sustained.

The duty of care commences from the point of receipt of the child/young person to the point of return to the parent/guardian/carer and the duty of care is non-transferable.

RECOMMENDED GOOD PRACTICE

- Always be publicly open when working with children/young people and avoid prolonged 1-1 working (unless this is within a designated therapy session with a qualified therapist/counsellor).
- Care should be taken at all times when working with and particularly when manually handling children/young people. Ensure you ask and gain the participant's consent if manual support is required.
- Care should be taken when aiding and assisting a disabled person from a wheelchair.
- Care should be taken when providing manual support such as when helping a rider to mount and dismount the horse or pony. Ensure you ask and gain the rider's consent if manual support is required.
- Care should be taken when manually supporting or aiding a child/participant whilst they are riding. Ensure you ask and gain the rider's consent if manual support is required.
- Treat all participants equally with respect and dignity.
- Always place the safety and welfare of the participants as the highest priority.
- Behave in an exemplary manner and be a role model for excellent behaviour.
- Motivate the participants through positive and constructive feedback.

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- Create a safe and enjoyable situation.
- Obtain written consent from parents if children/young people are required to be transported by staff, committee/board members, trustees, helpers or volunteers.
- Maintain a written report of any incident or injury together with any subsequent treatment and immediately complete an accident report form.

PRACTICE TO BE AVOIDED

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others.
- Taking children and young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

The above should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and/or the child's parents, e.g. a child/young person sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent/carer fails to arrive to pick up a child/young person at the end of a session and it is not possible to contact any other next of kin.

PRACTICE WHICH SHOULD NEVER BE CONDONED

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
- share a room with a child/young person;
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- make sexually suggestive remarks to a child/young person—even in fun;
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- allow allegations made by a child/young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;

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- do things of a personal nature for a child/young person if they can do it for themselves, unless you have been requested to do so by the parents/carers (do so with the utmost discretion);
- never depart from the premises until you have supervised the safe dispersal of the children/young persons;
- abuse your privileged position of power or trust with children or young people;
- cause a participant to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual;
- have favourites.

INDICATORS OF ABUSE, BULLYING AND EXPLOITATION

Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. Becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.

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- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite or loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Unexplained acquisition of money, gifts or mobile phones.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

It is NOT the responsibility of those working at Sirona to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns and inform the designated Safeguarding Officer.

SAFE PRACTICE IN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague and make a written note of the event, signed and dated. Parents and/or carers should also be informed of the incident:

- if you accidentally hurt a child/young person;
- if a child/young person misinterprets something you have done;
- if you have to restrain a child/young person (please note: minimum force must only be used and see Sirona's no restraint/touch policy).

It is impossible to establish guidelines for every situation which may become evident at Sirona; common sense should be used at all times.

ONLINE SAFETY

The online world provides everyone with many opportunities; however, it can also present risks and challenges. Children and young people can be exploited and suffer bullying through their use of modern technology such as the internet, mobile phones and social networking sites.

Whilst Sirona does not provide internet access to participants, we have a duty to ensure that all children, young people and adults involved in our organisation are protected from potential harm online. Working in partnership with children, young

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people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to online safety.

For more information, please see Sirona E-Policy.

RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM AND PREVENT DUTY

We recognise that people we work with may be vulnerable individuals who have the potential to be radicalised or influenced by violent extremism. Keeping children safe at risk of radicalisation should be approached in the same way as safeguarding children from other risks.

The Prevent Duty for England and Wales (2023) under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on education and other children's services to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Extremism is defined as 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. Some children are at risk of being radicalised; adopting beliefs and engaging in activities which are harmful, criminal or dangerous.

Sirona is clear that exploitation of vulnerable children and radicalisation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern and follows the Department for Education guidance for settings and childcare providers on preventing children and young people from being drawn into terrorism.

Sirona seeks to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

Sirona staff receive training to help identify early signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Opportunities are provided at Sirona to enable pupils to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture.

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Definitions of Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

Extremism is defined by the Government in the Prevent Strategy as: Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as:

The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs.
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts.
- Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
- Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.

There is no such thing as a “typical extremist”: those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremist activity.

Learners may become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of social, personal and environmental factors - it is known that violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. It is vital that setting staff are able to recognise those vulnerabilities.

Indicators of vulnerability to Radicalisation and Extremism include:

Identity Crisis – the learner is distanced from their cultural / religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society.

Personal Crisis – the young person may be experiencing family tensions; a sense of

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isolation; and low self-esteem; they may have dissociated from their existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends; they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.

Personal Circumstances – migration; local community tensions; and events affecting the student's country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy.

- Unmet Aspirations – the student may have perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life.
- Experiences of Criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, and poor resettlement / reintegration.
- Special Educational Need – students may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.

However, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all young people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism. More critical risk factors could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters.
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element.
- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature.
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage.
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues.
- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations.
- Significant changes to appearance and / or behaviour.
- Experiencing a high level of social isolation resulting in issues of identity crisis and / or personal crisis.

The Prevent duty ensures settings and colleges have 'due regard' to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

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Channel is the voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to individuals that have been identified as being vulnerable to radicalisation.

Prevent referrals may be passed to the multi-agency Channel panel to determine whether individuals require support.

If any member of staff has concerns that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, they should speak with the DSL. They should then follow normal safeguarding procedures. If the matter is urgent then the Police must be contacted by dialling 999. In non-urgent cases where police advice is sought then dial 101 or the national police Prevent advice line on 0800 011 3764.

Guidance on Channel <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-guidance>

Further information can be obtained from the Home Office website.

Also see Sirona PREVENT Information Sharing Policy.

LOW-LEVEL SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

This section is based on concerns that do not meet the harm threshold in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including practitioners, volunteers and freelance contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out previously.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside Sirona
- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

Definition of Low-Level Concerns

The term 'Low-Level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of Sirona may have acted in a way that:

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- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

Sharing Low-Level concerns

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others
- Have clear policies and procedures
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concern
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Helping to identify any weakness in Sirona's safeguarding system

Reporting a low level concern

- Low level concerns about a member of staff, freelance staff, contractors or volunteers should be reported to the DSL and follow Child Protection procedures.

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- If the concern is about the DSL this should be reported to the Board of Trustees Safeguarding officer and/or Chair of Trustees
- Low level concerns should be reported using Low-Level Concerns Reporting Form (in safeguarding folder)

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the DSL/Sirona manager will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The DSL will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with Sirona's staff Code of Conduct.

- Allegations that meet the harm threshold will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that Sirona feel may need further guidance on will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that Sirona feel they can deal with internally will be dealt with via Sirona's usual child protection investigation process.
- Sirona will engage with its HR provider where it is necessary to undertake further investigation and/or deal with the concern under relevant processes.

Record keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing (form in safeguarding folder). In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such

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behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority

- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at Sirona

Where a low-level concern relates to a freelance practitioner or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Reviewing a low level concern

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the Sirona manager /board of trustees will decide on a course of action, which may include:

- Disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings
- Management Advice, including recommendations for training
- Referral to the LADO (where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold).

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance.

PROCEDURE FOR DOCUMENTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

If you are made aware of any allegations or suspicions of harm to a child, you should report your concerns immediately to the Safeguarding Officer at Sirona. When working through the process it is recommended that you:

- Remain calm and reassure the person that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- Listen carefully and don't interrupt, give the person time to speak.

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- Explain that only the professionals who need to know will be informed, but **never promise confidentiality**.
- Act immediately, and do not try to address the issue yourself.
- Write a statement giving as much detail as possible; date & time, using the person's own words to record what was said and any actions, how you acted, any names / parties mentioned. Sirona has a designated safeguarding incident report form to use for this purpose.
- Report to the Sirona Safeguarding Officer or line manager who is then responsible for contacting the LSO. It is the duty of anyone working with children to report disclosure or harm.
- Remember that it is not for you to decide whether or not a suspicion or claim is true; all instances must be taken seriously.

Contact details for the person responsible for the Sirona Safeguarding Office are at the end of this policy and are on display in the main office and on the door in the classroom / tack room and cloakroom. The Sirona Safeguarding Officers are happy to discuss any queries regarding referrals, training matters or issues of concern.

The Designated Sirona Safeguarding Officers are:

Safeguarding Lead: **HANNAH BURGON** Tel: 01803 868779/07958 356114

Deputy Safeguarding Officer: **KATE FORD** Tel: 01803 868779

and **KIRSTY BOWLES**: Tel. 01803 868779

Email: hannah@sironaequine.org.uk or kate@sironaequine.org.uk or kirsty@sironaequine.org.uk

Designated Safeguarding Trustee: **Deirdre Ford** Tel: 01803 868779

IF YOU FEEL THAT A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER CALL 999

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FURTHER ADVICE AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE:

For Devon County Council: www.devonscp.org.uk

- Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership (Devon SCP) - 01392 386067
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): 0345 155 1071 or email: mashsecure@devon.gov.uk
- Devon Children's Services Emergency/out of hours: 0345 600 0388
- Devon Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO): 01392 384964 or e-mail: ladosecure-mailbox@devon.gcsx.gov.uk for a notification form.
- DiAS (for SEND) – 01392 383080

For Torbay Unitary Authority: <http://www.torbaysafeguarding.org.uk/>

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): - 01803 208 100 or email: mash@torbay.gov.uk
- Torbay Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO): – 01803 208567 or 01803 208541
- Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) – informal safeguarding advice email: Tess@torbay.gov.uk

For Plymouth: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/adults-and-childrens-social-care>

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 01752 668000 (or 01752 346984 out of hours)
- Plymouth Designated Officers (LADO) email LADO@plymouth.gov.uk or call **01752 306340**

For Cornwall: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/>

- Children: Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) 0300 123 1116 Email: multiagencyreferralunit@cornwall.gov.uk Out of hours 01208 251 300
- Adults: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 0300 123 4131. Email: acessteam.referral@cornwall.gov.uk
- Cornwall Designated Officers (LADO) email LADO@cornwall.gov.uk or call **01752 306340**

Additional support:

- NSPCC Helpline - 0808 800 5000 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/nspcc-helpline/>
- Childline - 0800 1111
- Police: 999 or 101 (non-emergency)
- National police PREVENT advice line [0800 011 3764](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/nspcc-helpline/)

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